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PROBLEM OF SUPPLIES DOMINANT FACTOR ON WESTERN FRONT

AFTER six months' silence, Adolf Hitler seized the occasion of the drive into Belgium to offer again to the German people hope that the war would certainly end in a Nazi victory. His New Year's message was an attempt to exploit on the psychological plane the immediate success of the German armies in the field. While the main Nazi offensive was definitely halted by the first week of January, there is no denying that it engendered pessimism about the outcome of the war—both with respect to its aims and its length. This pessimism may be increased by the attack launched from the Saar Basin on January 2. But just as the political decisions taken in some of the liberated countries must eventually be related to the European scene as a whole, so also our setback in the West must be viewed in relation to the efforts of the Russians in Poland and in Hungary, to the Italian campaign, and to an understanding of the military exigencies preceding or attending the present German diversionary counterattack.

MILITARY IMPERATIVES. Most observers, in viewing the German break-through on December 16, have assumed either that Allied intelligence services were faulty or that the importance earlier attributed to air power must now definitely be discounted. Yet the success of the German push may be explained by reasons more fundamental than these immediate considerations. Factors which date from "D" day offer an adequate explanation for what has taken place in Belgium. Difficulties of supply—both in material and men—which existed since beachheads were first established in Normandy, have now become paramount. The full story of the invasion has only recently been released to the public. In large part the invasion was accomplished through the use of specially constructed floating docks, thereby precluding the necessity of seizing all of the Atlantic ports so well fortified by the Germans.

The port of Antwerp, however, was of vital im-

portance, and has borne the brunt as the supply center for the Allied armies operating below Arnhem and Aachen. Although this port suffered less destruction than was first surmised, it has been subject to air attack and robot-bombing since its liberation; and ship-unloadings have probably been much delayed as a result. Adding to the communications problem is the fact that the railway network in western France and Belgium was seriously crippled by pre-invasion bombings and by German looting of much of the rolling stock. Hence it was never possible to build up sufficient forward supply reserves, or dumps, directly behind the lines at those points which the several Allied armies took up on the German border after our break-through in Normandy had forced the hurried Nazi retreat.

So swiftly did the Allied armies push the German forces to their own border that it has likewise proved impossible to establish reserves of men, equipped and organized into army units, for disposal of the General Headquarters Staff. And meanwhile it has proved necessary to station certain American, French and British troops within striking distance of Atlantic ports still held by the Germans in order to contain their Nazi garrisons. This lack of reserves in men has been borne out by the fact that General Patton's Third Army, which has to date proved the most effective against the German salient in Belgium and Luxembourg, was forced to shift westward to meet the attack. Also, disposition of troops on the northern flank of the German thrust shows that British units have been brought into the battle, units which were heretofore operating north of the American First Army.

PROBLEMS FACED BY GERMANS. The present German attack, therefore, appears less adverse to the United Nations when viewed in the perspective of the Allied invasion accomplished so brilliantly last summer. Due to the speed of the subsequent

march across France and Belgium, the severe strain on supplies and men was inevitable. But, despite these conditions, the limited force and slower tempo of the German drive are in decided contrast to the Germans' push toward Sedan in 1940. Today, moreover, the Germans are faced with continuous pressure in the East. In view of the Russian attack on Budapest, the Germans can gain little comfort from relaxation of the drive along the Polish border. Russian hesitation in Poland is doubtless dictated by conditions similar to those encountered by the western Allies. While exerting steady pressure around Aachen, Britain and the United States could not mount a full assault until the supply problem had been solved. Similarly, the Russian supply lines are now extended, and no move could have been made in eastern Poland until the marsh lands there were frozen and until the railway gauges were changed. Just as the Allied forces are kept from the front to contain the German port garrisons, so the Soviet armies must also protect their rear from sizable German forces left in the Baltic.

Despite the current show of energy on the part of the Germans, there is much to indicate that the present drive in the West, like that of 1918, may well be their last. For problems of supply are also important from the German point of view. Although temporary gains have been made by shortened lines of communication and the withdrawal to defensive positions within the Reich, the growing effect of strategic bombing will increasingly jeopardize German sources of materials. Also, the Germans are undergoing the winter bereft of food supplies formerly drawn from all of Europe. Their own agricultural situation, although better organized than was the case in 1914-18, must have deteriorated since

last June when, with pressure from the west, south and east, it was no longer possible to release men from the armies for plantings or harvests. By all reasonable calculations the Germans must face their supply problem with great uncertainty, whereas the Allies have the possibility, however delayed, of resolving their supply difficulties.

ALLIED UNITY NEEDED. Just as the Nazis have been unable fully to exploit their surprise in the field, so they will have failed to drive a wedge in the military coalition they face if, after this temporary setback, the Allies redouble their efforts to formulate a unified and positive program for European reconstruction after the war, including arrangements for Germany. Although General von Rundstedt's immediate success in no way alters the policy of unconditional German surrender, still the need persists for Allied agreement with regard to post-surrender plans. Many of the existing political problems, even on the periphery of Europe, can be solved more easily if this central question—the treatment of Germany—is determined now by united Allied action.

Decisions will have to be reached with respect to German territories and control of German economy, but the severity of whatever measures are to be taken is less important than Allied agreement about them, and especially agreement about their continued enforcement. If such decisions are achieved in unity, then—due to their effect on German morale—the war may be materially shortened. Such a result would in itself answer Hitler's latest boast and compensate for Allied losses and delays caused by the German counterattack.

GRANT S. McCLELLAN

CHIANG PROMISES CONSTITUTION AS DEMAND FOR REFORM RISES

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's New Year message to the Chinese people, promising the creation of a constitutional government during the war, is a significant reflection of the crisis that came to a head in China in 1944. The past twelve months witnessed dangerous advances by Japanese armies, an upsurge of criticism among Chungking's own supporters, and somewhat strained relations with the United States. As a result, in November, shortly after the Stilwell incident, the Chinese cabinet was reshuffled, and the forward-looking General Chen Cheng replaced General Ho Ying-chin as Minister of War. This was followed on December 4 by the appointment of Foreign Minister T. V. Soong as Acting President of the Executive Yuan. The effect of these changes was to arouse hopes of further improvement without indicating that Chungking was committing itself decisively to a new political course which would produce greater unity and military effectiveness.

The Generalissimo's statement of December 31 on constitutional democracy falls into the same pattern of reassuring, but inconclusive, developments. His pledge reverses the position taken by the government in September 1943: that a constitutional convention should be held one year after victory. He now appears to have accepted the view of various Chinese critics that constitutional rule cannot wait but is needed during the war to weld the nation more closely together for successful military operations. Yet his declaration is not entirely clear for, while referring to 1945 as the year in which a People's Congress is to be convened, he also makes this meeting contingent upon the military situation's becoming "so stabilized as to enable us to launch counter-offensives with greater assurance of victory." In view of China's precarious war situation, the question arises whether these conditions—which themselves require definition—can be met by the end of 1945.

ENEMY THREAT REMAINS. A lull now pre-

vails on Chungking's land fronts, following the repulse of Japanese forces which invaded Kweichow province in November and approached to within less than 70 miles of Kweiyang, capital of the province and a crucial communications center in Southwest China. The fall of Kweiyang would have endangered both Chungking, the national capital, and Kunming, main base of the United States air forces in China. But the enemy failed, for the forces sent into Kweichow were small, and Chungking marshaled against them not only troops already stationed in the area, but fresh soldiers removed from the blockade of the Communist territories in the Northwest. The fact remains, however, that Japan has not lost its ability to strike and may do so in greater force after it has consolidated its positions in neighboring Kwangsi province.

MILITARY ASSETS. Certain factors may be of aid to China in the coming year. For example, the quantity of supplies brought in by air has been growing, and a further increase is to be expected. Also important is the probability that the Ledo Road from India to China will soon be completed, enabling the Chinese to secure additional aid, including some heavy guns and other equipment not transportable by air. The extension and completion of the Calcutta-Yunnan pipeline, which already runs well into north Burma, would greatly improve China's fuel situation, relieving the air transport service of the major burden of carrying large quantities of gasoline. One of the important questions about the new year that cannot yet be answered is whether American forces will land on the China coast, opening up a coastal port and breaking the Japanese blockade in decisive fashion.

Recent developments in China's internal policies may foreshadow somewhat greater military effectiveness than last year. The War Production Board in Chungking, organized with the aid of Donald M. Nelson, is seeking to increase the domestic output of war materials. And General Chen Cheng is clearly making a genuine effort to improve army condi-

tions. It is reported that concrete measures with respect to food and shoe allowances and vegetable rations have been adopted, and that improvements have occurred in the collection, storage and distribution of ammunition and other supplies.

RELATIONS WITH U.S. As a result of these moves, American-Chinese relations are better than they were two months ago. General Chen and Major General Albert C. Wedemeyer, General Stilwell's successor, give every sign of getting along well together, while American Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley has stated that the recent cabinet shifts "in a large measure were responsible for putting the National Government, the United States military mission and this Embassy in one team."

Nevertheless, the basic political issues facing the Chinese people—a genuine liberalization of the régime and the achievement of a settlement between Chungking and the Communists—still await solution. Although adjustment of both problems is essential to the fullest mobilization of China's resources, there is no clear-cut indication at present that the necessary changes will take place. In November and early December discussions between Chungking and Yenan were renewed, but on December 15 Mao Tse-tung, Communist leader, declared that negotiations had not "attained the least result." Again on New Year's day Mao issued a statement urging the formation of a coalition government to "carry out democratic programs and mobilize as well as unite all our resources against Japan."

To facilitate a compromise in China is plainly an important objective of American policy, for Ambassador Hurley revealed on December 15 that he had taken part in the conversations between Chungking and the Communists that led to the transfer of troops to Kweichow. He also disclosed that he had made an inspection trip to Yenan, where American military observers have been stationed since last summer. Yet it should not be forgotten that, while American concern about the military effects of Chinese conditions is an important factor in the situation, there is at the same time very strong pressure for improvement from inside China. The latest evidence of this is to be found in a statement of January 1 by more than sixty members of the People's Political Council, calling for the immediate legalization of all political parties and the assurance of free speech and press. In effect, this is a demand that two of the important results of constitutional democracy be achieved without delay, regardless of the date finally set for the adoption of a constitution.

LAWRENCE K. ROSINGER

JUST PUBLISHED—

CHINA AS A POST-WAR MARKET

by Lawrence K. Rosinger

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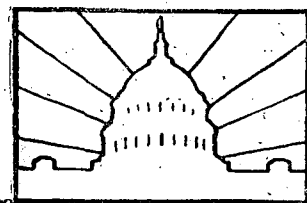
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Washington News Letter



FEAR OF U.S. ISOLATION HAUNTS EUROPE

The nations of Europe, including Russia, still doubt whether the United States is ready to practice effective and lasting international collaboration. The London *Times* of December 19 noted an official "lack of confidence in the ability of the American government to overcome the classic isolationism of the United States," and Russia is said to fear that the United States may weary of continental commitments—if it ever makes them.

RUSSIA'S FEARS ABOUT SECURITY. So long as this uncertainty persists, we must not be surprised if Russia takes measures that seem to be at variance with our hopes for international action, such as its refusal to admit UNRRA representatives to Poland and Czechoslovakia, disclosed on December 29 by UNRRA Director General Herbert H. Lehman. Russia's paramount interest is its own security after the war. The strong statement of Marshal Stalin on November 6, favoring a system of international cooperation, indicates that Russia's chief hope still lies in collective security. But, lacking full faith in the possibility of achieving a system of collective security, Russia will try to bolster itself by such special security arrangements as its unilateral revision of the Russo-Polish frontier.

Russia's doubts concerning the likelihood of establishing a system of collective security explain its hesitation to give foreigners freedom of action on its territory. A factor in Moscow's refusal to attend the Chicago aviation conference was Russia's reluctance to open its skies to the planes of other, possibly hostile, nations. The Soviet government cautiously restricts the amount of information it permits the United States government to distribute in Russia, and controls the manner of its distribution. Russia's attitude toward UNRRA is due to suspicion, aggravated by memories of the anti-Soviet attitude of Herbert Hoover in the years when he supervised distribution of relief to Russia after World War I, and of the many rebuffs it suffered during the inter-war years. Its present policies are also affected by concern over the Allies' failure to settle the issue of the Polish government.

During the Dumbarton Oaks conference, *Izvestia* said last September 22 that "Soviet diplomacy does not close its eyes to difficulties that arise in organizing joint action by members of the anti-Hitlerite coalition." Recent weeks have brought more than their share of these difficulties. The United States

has received word that the Russian Army may have sent from Rumania to the Soviet Union oil-drilling machinery owned by American firms. Newspapers in this country have published criticisms of reports that Bulgaria includes among the "war criminals" it has brought to trial Nicolai Mushanoff, a member of the short-lived Bulgarian cabinet that opened negotiations for an armistice with the United States and Britain last September. The United States government, however, steadfastly credits Russia with honest intentions, although some Americans who have not considered the security motives of Soviet policy are inclined to make hasty criticisms both of the Russians, and of Communists in European countries.

RUSSIA COOPERATES WITH ALLIES. In most matters Russia recognizes the combined interests of the Allies. Russian generals in charge of armies of occupation may sometimes take an uncooperative attitude toward their Allies, but the Moscow government is usually ready to reverse the decisions of its own representatives. Thus in September, when the Russian Army command in Rumania declined to allow American officers to keep photographs of the scenes of destruction wrought at Plöesti by American bombers, Moscow ordered release of the photographs. More recently, the Russian government has consented to Allied inquiry into the problem of the oil equipment in Rumania, where Germans as well as Americans have had petroleum holdings. In accordance with the Allied policy of joint negotiation of armistice terms, the United States, Russia and Britain are expected jointly to negotiate an armistice with the provisional Hungarian government of Colonel General Bela Miklos, formed in Debrecen. This country is represented in Rumania and Bulgaria by diplomats as well as military staffs.

Many Americans will ask: How can the Soviet Union retain any doubts about the future intentions of the United States when the chief interest of President Roosevelt is in the establishment of an international security organization? The answer is that the Russians, like the other peoples of Europe, see a portent in this country's failure to show "a willingness to get down into the dust of the arena"—the words of the London *Economist* on December 29—and cooperate actively now in the settlement of European problems that cannot wait for the creation of an effective international organization.

BLAIR BOLLES

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